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STANISLAUS COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION AWARDS MORE THAN \$800,000 IN GRANTS TO COMMUNITY

Modesto, Ca. --- In its first round of funding from Proposition 10 tobacco tax money, the Stanislaus County Children and Families Commission has approved \$822,761 in grants to help improve the lives of children and their families. The eight member Commission last night awarded 172 grants to a host of recipients including private daycare centers, community agencies, and schools to provide programs and services to children from the prenatal stage to age five.

“We’re delivering on the promise of Prop. 10 with the release of funds in our community,” said Commission Chair Reverend Nathaniel Green. “Prop 10 represents a big boost to our county and will help ensure that our youngest children are healthy and ready to learn when they enter school. We’re very excited about releasing the funds.”

Recommendations for funding came from United Way of Stanislaus County. The local commission is partnering with the non- profit agency to help administer the money. 39 community volunteers poured through a total of 218 grant applications before deciding which proposals would be recommended for funding to commission members.

Some applications were recommended for full funding while others were recommended for partial funding. “Our volunteers were very conscientious,” commented Rebecca Ciszek with United Way.

Grants were awarded in two categories: community designated pilot programs of up to \$50,000 each and mini grants from \$250 to \$5,000. A one time purchase of up to \$20,000 for playground equipment was also included in the mini grant cycle.

Applications for the pilot programs had to respond to one of the following strategic results---to improve child development, improve systems for families, improve family functioning and improve child health.

The proposals funded ranged from educational materials and parent education programs to computers, curriculum and playground equipment.

Alicia's Daycare in Ceres got what it requested--\$4, 616 dollars for mini learning centers and arts and crafts to help provide 24-hour child care for working families. Owner Alisha Browning says the money is a godsend. "We just started up in April and have been slowly buying things we need. This is awesome," she said.

The Community Housing and Shelter Services was awarded \$50,000 for a pilot program to relocate seven homeless families to subsidized rental housing. "This will definitely make a big difference in the lives of families and children in our county," commented Executive Director Dianna Olsen.

The money distributed is part of 2 million dollars in this first round of grants. The Commission wants to insure the process is fair and wants to help applicants who lost out because of missing information or technicalities. It has also asked for more time to review some competing designated pilot grants and go out for bids again in three other programs.

Funding for early childhood programs is unique. While studies indicate that a child's experience in the first years of life have a profound impact on education, social and economic outcomes, most public spending for children is focused on the years after the majority of brain growth has occurred. Funds generated from Prop. 10 support children at a local level, from prenatal to age five, by creating a comprehensive and integrated system of information and services to promote early childhood development and anti-tobacco education programs.

The Stanislaus County Children and Families Commission was established in 1998 after California voters passed Proposition 10, an unprecedented statewide initiative that levied a 50-cent tax per pack on cigarettes. Stanislaus County receives 7.2 million dollars a year from the tobacco tax revenue.

"The grants we've approved are a wonderful first step in helping kids and their families," commented Commission Executive Director Noe Paramo.

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